

CHRISTIAN COURTSHIP, PART IV: WHAT CONSTITUTES A GODLY COURTSHIP?

In this final study on Christian Courtship, I wanted to wrap up some important matters under one packaging. I cannot emphasize how important the next few admonitions on this subject are. Please take heed!

I. Court in purity.

Paul said to Timothy, *"...keep thyself pure"* (I Timothy 5:22). He also said to the Thessalonians, *"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour"* (I Thessalonians 4:3,4).

The Bible plainly teaches in these two passages purity and abstinence from sexual misconduct. Paul is saying that everyone in Christ has the ability to possess his vessel or in other words, control his or her body, as Paul also spoke *"...but I will not be brought under the power of any"* (I Corinthians 6:12).

To stay under control, it is important to not do those things that would on purpose stir up the sensual desires. Many scholars believe this is what the Shulamite maiden was requesting when she said, *"...that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please"* (Song of Solomon 2:7). In plain and simple terms, keep your hands off each other! The Bible says, *"Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman"* (I Corinthians 7:1). The word for "touch" in Greek is "haptomai" which is defined: adhere to, cling or cohabitation. The following verse says, *"Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband"* (I Corinthians 7:22). The Lord is pointing out through His Word, if you are going to be involved in the physical sense, you are to be married. Becoming physically involved is like lighting a candle in a room full of dynamite. That's why the Word says, *"But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn"* (I Corinthians 7:9). The word "burn" in Greek is "puroo" which means to set on fire, kindle. There is an inference that if one cannot contain, then we must "settle for." God's foremost call in the context of the Scripture is to control yourself. We see this call in the detailed definition in the Thayer's Greek lexical study. The word translated into English "contain" comes to us from *egkrateuomai* which means to be temperate, to be self-controlled, continent, to exhibit self-government, conduct, one's self temperately; in a figure drawn from athletes, who in preparing themselves for the games abstained from unwholesome food, wine and sexual indulgence. I have heard the argument that if I cannot control myself, then God would be pleased to have me married. Using this logic, can you imagine a gold medalist telling school children, "If you don't want to work out, quit, after all, this world is full of losers!" Imagine a concert pianist telling youth, "If

practicing bores you, quit; let Dad make firewood out of your piano.” The truth is we shall not hear this kind of talk. But, please examine what God is saying, “If you are a quitter and will not be controlled, marry and perhaps enjoy at best my second best, but my first call to you is abstain and wait.” We ask, “How shall we wait, with these desires?” The biblical principle is hands off until marriage. In the long run, it will make marriage so much more beautiful. Courting in purity makes physical contact within marriage sacred.

II. Court someone who is fun.

One of the saddest things is to see a couple get serious too fast. Part of the fruit of a not-so-ripe involvement is an inordinate jealousy and possessiveness. You will be doing yourself a big favor by putting this relationship on hold or consider this: God may have allowed the discontent because you are either too early involved or you are pursuing the wrong person. Any couple can have an every now and then quarrel, but a continual unhappiness is definitely not God’s plan. *“...no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly”* (Psalm 84:11). The Bible says, *“Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore”* (Psalm 16:11). If the presence of God brings pleasure, would He assign any of His children the rigorous task of being with a person whose very presence robs you of the joy of the Lord?

III. Court someone who brings out the best in you.

I have noticed when a person is courting in the will of God, better qualities come out. There is contentment, a smile, a willingness to help people, not hurt people. The lust factor diminishes as the love factor blossoms. No wonder the Bible says, *“House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD”* (Proverbs 19:14). *“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD”* (Proverbs 18:22).

IV. Court someone who brings you closer to God.

This has to be one of the great tests of a genuine, God sent, made-in-Heaven courtship, which leads to marriage, i.e. “Does the person I’m courting bring me closer to God?” If partaking of the company in a serious courtship is taking you out of service for God and taking your heart from God, then something needs to be re-evaluated quickly.

A perfect example of 2 young people that were brought closer to the Lord in Christian courtship is the martyr Jim Elliot and his wife Elizabeth. Soon after Jim & Betty met, he wrote these words to his parents:

“There is a thought-bond that I have known with few others, and a huge thirst for God that may surpass my own in many respects. Both of us sense the kindred interests in one another, but are a little awed to speak of it, fearing it may lead to relationships

neither of us intended. The Lord knows how I surrendered this 'love-life' business to Him long ago, and the assurance that He will eventually lead into His way is strong tonight. Beloved, if you ever prayed for Jim, redouble your earnestness. I seek His will alone."

Exodus 20:3 says, *"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."* God intends all binding relationships to draw us closer to Him, never to become an idol that takes us away from Him.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

2003

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2008

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